



# THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 13

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## THE WISDOM IN ISLAM

Khalid ibn El Waleed narrated the following hadith: **A Bedouin came one day to the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and said to him, "O, Messenger of Allah! I've come to ask you a few questions about the affairs of this life and the Hereafter. "**

- Ask what you wish.
- I'd like to be the most learned of men.
- Fear Allah, and you will be the most learned of men.
- I wish to be the richest man in the world.
- Be contented, and you will be the richest man in the world.
- I'd like to be the most just man.
- Desire for others what you desire for yourself, and you will be the most just of men.
- I want to be the best of men.
- Do good to others and you will be the best of men.
- I wish to be the most favored by Allah.
- Engage much in Allah's praise, and you will be most favored by Him.
- I'd like to complete my faith.
- If you have good manners you will complete your faith.
- I wish to be among those who do good.
- Adore Allah as if you see Him. If you don't see Him, He seeth you. In this way you will be among those who do good.
- I wish to be obedient to Allah.
- If you observe Allah's commands you will be obedient.
- I'd like to be free from all sins.
- Bathe yourself from impurity and you will be free from all sins.
- I'd like to be raised on the Day of Judgment in the light.
- Don't wrong yourself or any other creature, and you will be raised on the Day of Judgment in the light.
- I'd like Allah to bestow His mercy on me.
- If you have mercy on yourself and on others, Allah will grant you mercy on the Day of Judgment.
- I'd like my sins to be very few.
- If you seek the forgiveness of Allah as much as you can, your sins will be very few.
- I'd like to be the most honorable man.
- If you do not complain to any fellow creature, you will be the most honorable of men.
- I'd like to be the strongest of men.
- If you put your trust in Allah, you be the strongest of men.
- I'd like to enlarge my provision.
- If you keep yourself pure, Allah will enlarge your provision.
- I'd like to be loved by Allah and His messenger.
- If you love what Allah and His messenger love you will be among their beloved ones.
- I wish to be safe from Allah's wrath on the Day of Judgment.
- If you do not lose your temper with any of your fellow creatures, you will be safe from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgment.
- I'd like my prayers to be responded.
- If you avoid forbidden actions your prayers will be responded.
- I'd like Allah not to disgrace me on the Day of Judgment.
- If you guard your chastity, Allah will not disgrace you on the Day of Judgment.
- I'd like Allah to provide me with a protective covering on the Day of Judgment.
- Do not uncover your fellow creatures' faults, and Allah will provide you with a covering protection on the Day of Judgment.
- What will save me from sins?
- Tears, humility and illness.
- What are the best deeds in the eyes of Allah?
- Gentle manners, modesty and patience.
- What are the worst evils in the eyes of Allah?
- Hot temper and miserliness.
- What assuages the wrath of Allah in this life and in the Hereafter?
- Concealed charity and kindness to relatives.
- What extinguishes hell's fires on the Day of Judgment?
- Patience in adversity and misfortunes.

### THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

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Imam El Mustaghfiri said: "I have never heard a tradition more comprehensive of the beauties of religion, and more beneficial than this hadith. It collects all the good things of Islam but not put to use." (Related by Imam Ibn Hambal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**Dear Editor,**

I am writing this letter to let you know that The Islamic Bulletin. Is the best newsletter I have ever read. I thank Allah for giving the writers such knowledge and understanding. Many of the articles are extremely touching that they make me cry. It is such a joy for me to find your bulletin available for English-Speaking people. Being a single woman it is difficult to incorporate all the principles in my daily life, but I do my best and hope Allah is pleased with my sincerity and efforts.

Your articles give me the feeling that I am not alone. I anxiously wait for them every month. I thank you again on such fine work and hope that with Allah's

help you may continue your great work. May Allah bless you.

Sister Elizabeth

Los Angeles, California

**Dear Editor,**

Yesterday I was given 2 copies of "The Islamic Bulletin" from a Saudi woman. I found it to be very interesting. Even though I live in a Muslim country, where Islam is all around me, it is hard to find good articles in English. Most everything here is in Arabic. There are great books of course, but not enough. I would like to receive a copy (subscription) to your bulletin. Can you please let me know the cost?

What I find here are many Islamic articles in the newspapers, magazines, etc. I put together a newsletter from this. I now have a list of 67 people from all over the U.S. What I would like to do is copy the back of one of your bulletin's and send it to all those on my list. Insha Allah many of them will subscribe.

Sister Mashal

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

**Dear Editor,**

**Assalamu Aleikum!**

I am currently incarcerated at Folsom State Prison and have accepted Islam about a year and a half ago. I have repented to Allah, a sincere repentance Inshallah. Your newsletter has completely guided me and changed my life. After reading each article I have tried to adapt it in my life, as they say 'Islam is a Way of Life'. As there are no scholars here in prisons I would like you to answer me the following question if you can.

Exactly how much are you allowed to talk about a person without 'back-biting'? Can you please give some examples of 'back-biting'?

Brother A. Rasheed

Folsom, California

**Response:**

**Dear Brother,**

**Wa Aleika Alsalam**

I hope the following answer will be of help to you. The Arabic word for back-biting is ghibah. When the Prophet - peace be upon him - was asked, "What is ghibah? He said, 'It is to talk about someone (in his absence) what he should have disliked'. The man further asked the Prophet, 'But if what I say is the truth, would it still be counted as ghibah? The Prophet - peace be upon him - said, "If what you say is true, then it is ghibah, but if what you say is not true then it is accusation (buhtan)".

The Hadith makes it very clear that if we have to talk about the mistakes of someone then we would do that in his presence and not at his back. Because when you talk about the mistakes of a person in his presence, he or she will be able to clarify his position or will be able to correct himself/herself. Also when you talk about someone in his/her presence you will be careful and will not exaggerate or say wrong things, but when the person is not present, then you are at liberty to say whatever you want and the poor fellow has no way to speak on his/her behalf. Also, sooner or later the report of your conversation will reach to that person and that will grieve him or make him angry. These things slowly ruin the group harmony and good relations.

You asked me to give you a few examples of back-biting. We'll take this one. A goes to B and starts talking about C. A he says to B, 'You know, C is a very cruel person. He beats his wife. He is very harsh to his children. He was fired several times from his job because of this bad behavior. And, moreover, do you know B, I have seen him once going into a video shop, probably, he was going to rent some X-rated movies.' Now, poor C is not present and all this conversation about him is occupying A and B's time. Do you think A would dare say these things in the presence of C? What will be the opinion of C about A and B when he finds out about this conversation? This is back-biting and it is forbidden in Islam.

But sometimes one cannot handle the problem oneself and one has to talk to someone else. Imam Nawawi in his Riyad al Salihin, has mentioned six situations where ghibah is allowed.

1. A person to whom injustice is done and she/he complains to the authorities in order to seek justice.
2. A person who seeks the help of someone to correct a wrong action or to stop a wrong doer. Ghibah is allowed if the intention of the person is sincerely to stop the wrong, otherwise it is haram unlawful).
3. A person who seeks the fatwa (religious decision) and goes to a Mufti (jurist) and says, "So and so is doing wrong to me or has deprived me of my right, what should I do? What am I allowed to do according to Shariah (Islamic Law), to address this wrong?" It is better to ask this question without giving the name of the person. But if it is necessary to mention the name then you are also allowed to mention the name and more details about the person.
4. In order to warn Muslims about someone who might harm them in their religion or their worldly matters, it is allowed to expose these wrong doers. It is for this reason the muhaddithin used to do critically examine people's record and give their opinions about the reporters of the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH).
5. If a person openly flouts the rules of Islam, such as drinking alcohol openly, there is no sin in telling people about those things that he does openly, but one should not speak about his other private wrongs unless there is a need that makes it necessary to do.
6. If a person is generally known among people by some nickname or title it is not ghibah to repeat that as long as the intention is not to defame the person.

As the hadith of Prophet (PBUH) says that every action will be judged according to the intention, it is very important that one should check one's intention before talking about another person's faults or mistakes.

### NEED TO CONTACT US?

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## ISLAM IN EUROPE IS ON THE RISE



Islam is the second largest religion in Europe today. In spite of periodic persecution and discrimination, Islam seems to be not only surviving but steadily growing in numbers of converts and influence. With the Serbian aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Muslim country, interest by people is growing in learning about Islam and Muslims.

This article is a review and history of the general situation of the Muslims of Europe today.

### **WESTERN EUROPE**

The Muslims in Western Europe are those who emigrated from Africa, the Middle East and the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent after the Second World War.

Due to manpower shortages and industrial growth in Western Europe after the Second World War, substantial numbers of Muslims migrated to Western Europe. These Muslims kept their cultural, religious and ethnic links with their mother countries.

Today these Muslims and their descendants, along with a growing number of native people who are accepting Islam have made the Muslim population the second largest in many parts of Europe.



Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, and Germany have large Muslim populations which are growing everyday. The Muslim community of these countries need separate articles to cover their growing social, cultural, and economic role in Western Europe.

### **POPULATION**

Reliable figures on the Muslim population in Western Europe are not available. However, it is believed that an estimated 10 million Muslims live in Western Europe today. France, Germany, and Britain have the largest Muslim populations. Muslim sources estimate that both France and Germany have about three million Muslims each, while Britain is said to have about two million. As in Britain, Islam has been the second largest religion in France since the 1970's. By the year 2,000, Muslims are expected to make up more than 10 percent of the French population.

By the mid 1980's, there was no Western European government that had not instituted some legal measures to stop further immigration of Muslim people from Asia, Africa and other parts of the world.

Large numbers of Europeans have converted to Islam in the last two decades. Their actual number remains unknown. The majority of these conversions have been made through the efforts of different ways or Islamic Sufi brotherhood and the Darqawiyahs which claim a link with the Arab-Moroccan city of Fez. Most of the Darqawi converts are drawn from the solid professional middle class and seek a return to the early traditions of Islam. European converts to Islam have included a number of prominent figures, especially in the academic life. This group includes Baron Omar Ehrenfels, the Austrian anthropologist (d. 1930); Vincent Morteil, the specialist on African and Islamic affairs, Michel Chodkiewicz, director of the French publishing house Editions du Seuil; and Roger Garudy, the French philosopher and former communist party member.

Several countries in Western Europe have recognized the Muslim feasts and holidays. Broadcast time has also been allowed to Muslims in France and some other countries. But problems remain. Muslims and Islam are still treated unfairly in the media. Any attempt by a Muslim society to make Islam as its foundation of life is seen as a challenge to western civilization and is immediately labeled as fundamentalist or terrorist.

Today, from Greece to Spain a new awakening is taking shape in forms of new institutions and projects. The establishment of the Muslim parliament of Britain is an indication of a new generation of Muslims confident and mature, resolute and strong.

### **ITALY**



Let us look at the history of the Muslims in Sicily. The Muslims arrived in the early 9th century - the Muslims left their imprint in the 250 year rule of the Island of Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean. By the 10th Century they had made Sicily the 'Bride of the Mediterranean'. All around the land was dotted with place names of Arab origin. Several hundred hamlets and towns have names derived from Arabic. For example, Baida is the Arabic bayda (white); Alcamo, al-Kamuk (a fort named after an Arab leader); Bagheria, babariya (place by the sea); and Marsala, marsa Allah (the harbor of God). The Gateway to Palace of the Normans in Palermo, was first built by the Muslims in the 9th Century.

Besides place names, a good number of Sicilian words have Arabic origins as bbazzariari (to sell cheaply) from the Arabic bazar, giubba (jacket) from the Arabic jubba and zecca, sikka (mint).

In the Muslim era, agriculture flourished as it never had before. Countless new plants were introduced and less than a century after the conquest of Sicily became known as 'The Garden Island of Southern Europe'.

The Arabs introduced citrus fruits and cultivated them on a large scale. Lemon (Italian limuni from the Arabic limun) and orange (aranciu from naranja) orchards were to be found in all parts of the Island. Today they are still widespread, their flowers carrying an Arabic name, zagara, originally zahr, their aromas hovering over every path and road.

From the repertoire of plants found in their homelands, the Muslims also brought with them buckwheat, brush palm, carob, cotton, gutun, jasmine, spinach, sugar, saffron, sumac, tarragon and raisins. The manufacture of silk and the refining of sugar became thriving industries and these later spread to the remainder of Italy and beyond.

To increase the yields of their fields and gardens, the Muslims extended the ancient irrigation works they had found on the island and built a vast number of reservoirs and water towers, many of which survive to this day.

In the field of Sicilian culinary art the Muslims had a profound effect. They influenced the island's cuisine with an unmistakable Arab touch. Although Sicilian dishes, beginning from about 1000 BC, borrowed much from the conquering Greeks, Phoenicians and Romans, it was only in the 9th century AD that they took on today's character. The rich foods of the Middle East, candied fruits and stuffed vegetables, new methods of preserving food, the drying of fruits and vegetables and the art of distillation, were some of the contributions made by the Arabs to the Sicilian kitchen.

Today the island's dishes are more adventurous than those found in the remainder of Italy. They are more spicy and sweeter than those of mainland - even pasta is made piquant. A number of writers who have studied the island's culinary art have concluded that almost everything in Sicilian cooking which differs from the mainland is inherited from the Muslims.

Dessert-making is, perhaps, the most important contribution made to the Sicilian cuisine by the Arabs. When the Muslims introduced sugar to the island they made possible a whole series of desserts. Sweets made from almonds, and the making of ice cream and sherbet were introduced into Sicily and spread to the remainder of Italy and so on to the whole of Europe. Undeniably, Arabic sweets based on honey are found all over Sicily.

Muslim population as a whole in Italy is nearly 30,000. For years Rome's community has been forced to pray in an annex of the Islamic Center in the residential Parioli of the city. Now two decades after the idea was first proposed by the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Rome's Muslims have started praying in their own mosque - a magnificent, 17 domed structure, whose prayer hall alone will accommodate 2000 people at a time.

## SPAIN

'History tells us little about Tarif ibn Malik, the Berber officer who landed in Spain in the early months of AD 710, heading a reconnaissance mission of 100 cavalry and 400 foot soldiers. But the place where he landed is named Tarifa in his honor, and Ibn Malik, as the first Muslim to enter Spain, takes pride of place in the long list of names - verbal historical markers - that testify to 800 years of Muslim civilization in al-Andalus.

Hard on Tarif's heels came that remarkable horseman Tariq ibn Ziyad, who stepped ashore in Algeciras Bay, a name derived from the Arabic al-Jazirah al-Khadra' - Green Island - which is probably how those desert warriors viewed fertile Spain. Tariq, at the head of his light cavalry, swept right up through the Iberian Peninsula to the Bay of Biscay. His name is perpetuated where his campaign began, at Gibraltar, Jabal Tariq, or Tariq's Mountain.

The Muslims, left 6,500 words - during their domination and the spread of Arabic place names across the peninsula tells us a lot about the ebb and flow of Arab conquest and settlement in what is today Spain and Portugal, and provides a tantalizing insight into the minds of the soldiers, geographers, poets and simple folk who came, made Spain their home and - in creating a unique culture - gave the land so much in return. Like the blue ceramic disks that mark historic buildings in London, or the cast - aluminum plaques that identify battlefields in Texas, the names on the land in Spain remind us of those past events that made the present. Arabic place names are most common around Valencia (called Balansiyah in Arabic) and in the vicinity of Malaga (Malaqah), Granada (Gharnatah) and Seville (Ishbiliyah), despite the many changes imposed by Ferdinand and Isabella after the reconquista. There's little trace of the

Arab presence, however, in Galicia, Asturias and parts of Navarre, Aragon and Catalunya, which are mountainous, inhospitable and were more easily defended against invaders. Besides, we know historically how the Muslim advance was checked in Cantabria around 718 and in Aragon about the same time. This helps explain why only 30 percent of Spain's Arabic place names are found north of the Tagus River, while over 65 percent occur south of that line. We can only guess at the identity of the geographers, chieftains, soldiers or settlers who named the various places and natural features they discovered as they moved across the land. But they faithfully recorded the imagery that their minds conjured up, and it's clear that the incidence of streams, rivers and high land struck them most. The syllable *guad-*, from *wadi*, meaning river or valley, is found frequently: Consider Guadalquivir (al-Wadi al-Kabir, great river), Guadalcazar (Wadi al-Qasr, river of the palace), Guadalhorra (Wadi al-Ghar, cave river), Guadarranque (Wadi al-Ramakah, mare river), Guadalquivitton (Wadi al-Qitt, cat river), Guadalajara (Wadi al-Hijarah, stony river), Guadalbazar (Wadi al-Baqar, cattle river), Guarroman (Wadi al-Rumman, pomegranate river), Guadalaviar (al-Wadi al-Abyad, white river) and Guadalimar (al-Wadi al-Ah-mar, red river). Some rivers have Arabic-sounding names whose derivations are nonetheless uncertain - for example, Guadalentin, believed by some scholars to derive from Wadi al-Tin, meaning mud or fig river, or Guadalbanar, which comes, just perhaps, from Wadi al Harb, river of war, or from Wadi al-Fanar, river of the lighthouse. Other place names give us visual images as well: Alhambra (al-Hamra', the red [fortress]), Arrecife (al-Rasif, the paved road), Almazara (al-Ma'sarah, the oil press), Aldea (al-Dai'ah, the small village), Alqueria (al-Qariyah, the village), Alcantara (al-Qantarah, the bridge) and Trafalgar, derived from the name of the cape, Taraf al-Ghar, meaning Cave Point.

The Arabic word *madinah*, or city, is found occasionally in Spanish place names - for example, *Medinaceli* (*Madinat Salim*, the city of Salim), *Medina-Sidonia* and *Medina del Campo* - while the descriptive *qal'ah*, meaning fortress or castle, is found in Aragon at *Calatayud*, or *Ayyub's Castle*, referring to one of the key leaders during the early years of al-Andalus, as well as in old Castile at *Calahorra* (from *Qal'at al-Hajar*, stone castle, or perhaps *al-Qal'ah al-Hurrah*, free castle) and in new Castile at *Calatrava* (*Qal'at al-Rabah's castle*). All in all, the word *qal'ah* is found imbedded in at least another half-dozen place names.

We get a glimpse, too, of some of the first Muslim families settling in Spain from use of the prefix *ben-* or *beni-*, from the Arabic *ibn*, son of, or *bani*, sons of, in the names of towns and other settlements. Witness such localities as *Benevites*, *Beniajar*, *Benanata*, *Benicalaf*, *Bentarique* and *Benadid*.

Natural features and manmade structures also figure prominently among place names with Arabic origins: *Alborg* (al-Burj, the tower), *Albufera* (al-Buhayrah, the lake), *Almeida* (al-Ma'idah, the dining table), *Alpujarras* (probably from al-Bajra, the highland), *Almeria* (al-Mirayah, the mirror), *Alqezar* (al-Qasr, the palace), *Almansil* (al-Manzil, the stopping place or house), *Almenara* (al-Manarah, the lighthouse or mosque tower, whence, via Turkish, comes our English word *minaret*) and *Almaden* (al-Maydan, the field).

Although various 19th- and early 20th-century writers among them Gayangos, Weston, Taylor, Pihan, Perceval and de Sousa - have recorded these derivations, an exhaustive study of Arabic-origin names in Spain has yet to be done. The same is true of lands beyond Spain's borders: In France, not far from Pau - on what must have been an important route across the Pyrenees - there is a fountain still called *La Houn*, from Arabic al-'Ain, the well or spring. And it may be worthwhile searching for Arabic names in mainland Italy, where Arab columns probed during the eighth, ninth and 10th centuries, in Sicily, and even in Switzerland, where legends of lost Arab warriors settling in remote valleys persist to this day. There, as well as across southern Spain, the names on the land record history.



## ***EASTERN EUROPE***

The majority of the Muslims of Europe today live in the eastern part of Europe. The area, which has a substantial Muslim population, is known as the Balkans. It is situated in southeastern Europe, consisting of present day Greece, Albania, former Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and the European part of Turkey. This area was once part of the Roman Empire (B.C.), and then came under the Byzantine Empire (5 A.D.) and finally under the Muslim Ottoman Empire during 15th to 20th centuries. All Balkan states except Greece and Turkey became communist after the Second World War.

East European Muslims are predominantly indigenous people of their countries. They became Muslims centuries ago and have practiced Islam enthusiastically until coming under communist domination and oppression. They became part of the cultural fabric of their native European societies over a long period of time. There are two countries at present which qualify to be called Muslim countries.

### **ALBANIA**

The Muslims of Albania are just now enjoying religious freedom after 45 years of communist oppression. The communists have done everything in their power to eliminate Islam from the society. Albania was the only communist state which banned religion. Today Albania is facing severe economic problems in the wake of the failure and collapse of communism. Albania is now slowly asserting its Islamic identity. It has made powerful friends in both Washington and in the Muslim world. It has helped transformed itself from Europe's poorest country to one with fastest growing economy in Europe. Albania has joined the Organization of Islamic Development Bank (IDB). IDB has set up a \$100 million holding company for development projects in Albania.

Islam came to Albania at the end of the 15th century.

Albanians have always been staunch followers of Islam. With the collapse of communism, which banned religion, Albanians are coming out of isolation and the practice of Islam is on the rise. In the last festival of Eid-al-Fitr more than 10,000 Muslims gathered in a public park in Tirana to hear Mufti Sabri Koci, who delivered the khutba. The feverish expression of Islam was out of the question during the communist era.

### **BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA**

The former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia Herzegovina became independent on April 6, 1992. According to Muslim sources, Muslims form at least 50 percent of the population. The Serbian population of Bosnia, estimated to be about 30 percent of the total population, supported a union with neighboring Serbia. Soon after the referendum in which the overwhelming majority of Bosnian, both Muslims and Croats, who form about 18 percent of the population, voted for independence, the Serbians revealed their designs and plans for creating a greater Serbia.

Today even after the destruction of over 1,000 mosques the killing of 300,000 people the rape of 55,000 sisters, Islam is rising out of the ashes of war, strong and confident.

### **MACEDONIA**

The former Yugoslav province of Macedonia declared its independence after the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe.

Muslims, who form about 45 percent of the population, suffered cruel repression during the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and also during World

War I and II. The new nation has a far greater problem than a squabble with Greece over a name: that is its growing and restive Muslim population. Macedonian Muslims, who are of Albanian descent, are said to be growing more conscious of their Islamic identity. In the western parts of Macedonia, they are believed to be 70 percent of the population.

Muslims believe that the Macedonian elections had not always been fair to time. As a result, out of a 120-member parliament, Muslims number only 23. But this might change with fair elections.

### **SANDZAK**

Sandzak is a province of Serbia which lies between Kosovo and Bosnia. Serbian leaders have put the area under military control. They have threatened to wipe out the Muslims in Sandzak. Muslims form about 60 percent of the population. Due to military rule, hardly any news is filtered out of the province, but stories of repression, torture and killings are reported by human rights organizations and Muslim sources.

### **KOSOVO**

Kosovo requires a separate article, due to its importance and the gravity of the situation there. However, we will briefly touch upon its ordeal here.

Kosovo is an autonomous region of former Yugoslavia. It borders Albania. About 95 percent of the Kosovans are Muslims of Albanian descent. In 1988 extreme nationalism and fascism raised their head in Yugoslavia and Kosovo came under constant pressure to end its autonomous status. The Yugoslav army was sent to the region and Muslims were removed from all positions of authority. Thousands were dismissed from their jobs. The idea was to force them out of the area and to carry out ethnic cleansing. Numerous cases of atrocities are reported by human rights organizations. The entire region of Kosovo is under martial law. The situation is very explosive. It is widely believed that Kosovo will be the second target of the Serbs in their drive to create a greater Serbia.

### **BULGARIA**

In the late nineteenth century, Muslims made up 57 percent of the population of what is now the territory called Bulgaria. After the invasion of 1877-78, a widespread massacre of Muslims was carried out. An estimated 350,000 Muslims were killed and 750,000 were driven out of their homes. In 1878 Bulgaria was detached from the Ottoman Empire. Ever since the establishment of the Bulgarian state, Muslims have suffered a planned and organized persecution. Despite this, today Muslims form 19 percent of the population.

Albania, with a Muslim population of 2.5 million and Bosnia Herzegovina with a population of 2.1 million Muslims; the other large Muslim concentration is in the autonomous region of Kosovo, where the Muslim population is estimated to be 1.2 million. Macedonia, a former republic of Yugoslavia, now an independent country, has 850,000 Muslims.

Bulgaria has a large Muslim population, which is estimated to be 1,007,237. Muslim sources believe that the actual Muslim population of Eastern Europe is higher than recorded in the official statistics of those countries. Current population figures of Muslims in Croatia are not available. However, substantial numbers of Muslims live in larger cities like Zagreb in Croatia. A small Muslim community of about 155,000 in Greece face persecution and adversity. Over all about 7.8 million Muslims live in Eastern Europe (excluding Turkey) forming about 25 percent of the total population of the Balkan states, according to conservative Muslim estimates.

## DO YOU KNOCK ON WOOD?

### THE ISLAMIC RULING ON OMENS AND CHARMS



The creation, maintenance and eventual destruction of the universe and its contents are by Allah's command and both good luck and bad occur according to Allah's will.

However, man, during all ages, has asked the question, "Is there any way of knowing before hand whether good times or bad times are coming?" For, if there is a way of knowing ahead of time, misfortune could then be avoided and success could be ensured.

From the most ancient of times some individuals have falsely claimed access to this hidden knowledge and the ignorant masses of mankind have revolved around them, paying huge sums to gain pieces of this vital information. Some of the contrived methods for averting misfortune became common knowledge; and thus, a profusion of good luck charms like those mentioned in this article can be found in most societies. Some of the imagined secret ways of knowing one's fortune also became common knowledge, and thus various types of omens and their interpretation can be found in all civilizations.

There is however, a body of this knowledge which has remained a secret, handed down from generation to generation; in the various forms of the occult arts of fortune-telling and magic. It is very important that a clear Islamic concept of these practices be developed because of their widespread occurrence in human societies. Perhaps even more important is the fact that if they are not clearly understood a Muslim could easily fall into the major sin of "Shirk" (lit. sharing; the association of partners with Allah), which, in Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry, which is at the root of these practices.

#### OMENS

Pre-Islamic Arabs used to consider the direction in which birds and animals moved to be a sign of impending good or bad fortune and would plan their lives around such signs. The practice of reading good and omens in bird and animal movements was referred to as *Tiyarah* from the verb *Taara* which means 'to take flight'. For example, if an individual set out on a journey and a bird flew over him and turned to the left, he would see in it a sign of impending bad fortune, turn around and return home.

The principle of deriving fortune forecasts from bird movements has been rejected in its totality by the Sunnah (pattern of life set by the Prophet, PBUH). The ancient Arabs took their omens from birds and other nations take theirs from elsewhere, but, the principle involved is the same. Often when the origins of these omens are identified, the *Shirk* in them becomes most obvious. The following are only a few of the countless omens presently observed in Western society:

#### KNOCK ON WOOD

When someone is thankful for something and hopes that his luck will not change he says, "Knock on wood" and looks around for some wood to knock. The origin of this belief goes back to the time when people in Europe thought that gods lived inside trees. If the wish were granted they would touch the tree again to thank the god.

#### SPILLING SALT

If salt is spilled, many believe that misfortune will shortly follow,

so the spilled salt is thrown over the left shoulder to counter it. The origin of omen lies in the ability of salt to keep things fresh. This was believed by the ancients to be due to its magical powers. Thus, spilling salt became a warning of evil. Since evil spirits were thought to live on one's left side, throwing the spilled salt over the left shoulder was supposed to satisfy the evil spirits.

#### BREAKING A MIRROR

Many people believe that breaking a mirror accidentally is a sign of seven years of bad luck. Ancient people thought that their reflections in water were their souls. So if their reflections were shattered (e.g.; if someone throw a pebble in the water), then their souls were also shattered. When mirrors were made this belief was shifted to them also.

#### BLACK CATS



The crossing of a black cat in front of one's path signals the coming of bad luck to many. This belief originated in the Middle Ages when people believed that black cats were witches pets. Witches were supposed to make magic brews by the brains of black cats with parts of toads, snakes and insects. If a witch's black cat lived for seven years, without ending up in a brew, the cat was supposed to change into a witch.

#### NUMBER 13



In America the number 13 is considered unlucky and thus, in many of the buildings the 13th floor is called the 14th. Friday the 13th is considered particularly unlucky and many people avoid travel or special engagements on this day. And if anything bad befalls them on that day, they immediately attribute it to the day itself. This phenomena is not restricted to the common people as some might mistakenly imagine. For example, the flight commander of the Apollo moonshot of 1970, which came near disaster, explained on his return that he should have known that something was going to happen.

When asked why he replied that the flight took place on Friday the 13th, blast off was at 1300 hours (i.e., one o'clock), and that the flight number was Apollo 13. The origin of this belief goes back to the evening of Jesus's last supper as told in the Bible that there were 13 people. One of the 13 was Judas, the man who supposedly betrayed Jesus. Friday the 13th is supposed to be particularly unlucky for at least two reasons. First, Friday is the day Jesus was supposed to be crucified. And, according to medial belief, Friday is the day when witches held their meetings.

Allah's ability to cause good and bad fortune is being shared by His creations in these beliefs. Also fear of misfortune and hope for good fortune which should only be directed to Allah, is being directed to other than Allah. Knowledge of the future and the unseen is also being claimed, and this quality belongs only to Allah. Allah clearly pointed this out in His attribute 'Aalim al Ghayb, Knower of the unseen. Allah even has the Prophet confess Quraan that had he known the unseen future, he would have avoided all misfortune. (Quran: Al-A'raaf 7:188)

Therefore the belief in omens can clearly be classified as an act of *Shirk* in all of the major areas of Tawheed (Lit. 'unification' or 'asserting oneness').

This ruling is further substantiated by the Hadeeth reported by Ibn Mas'oud in which Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "**Tiyarah is Shirk! Tiyarah is Shirk! Tiyarah is Shirk!**"

Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn al 'Aas also reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said, **"Whoever is prevented from doing something by Tiyyarah, has committed shirk."** The companions asked, **"What is its atonement?"** He replied, **"Say: 'Allaahumma laa khayra illaa khayruk wa laa Tayra illaa Tayruk wa laa elaaha ghayruk.'** ('Oh Allah, there is no good except Your good, nor birds except Yours, and there is no god beside You')." (Collected by Ahmed and at-Tabaraanee.)

From the preceding Hadeeths, it can clearly be seen that the Tiyyarah was not in any way limited to birds. It includes all forms of beliefs in omens. These beliefs vary in form from place to place and from time to time but they all have the same common denominator of Shirk.

Therefore, Muslims are obliged to carefully avoid all feelings which stem from these beliefs. If they find themselves unconsciously acting on the basis of these beliefs, they should seek refuge in Allah and say the previously mentioned Du'aa (prayer).

## CHARMS

It was the practice among the Arabs in the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to wear arm bracelets, bangles, beaded necklaces, shells, etc., as charms to avert evil and bring good fortune. Talismans and amulets can also be found in all regions of the earth in a variety of forms. Faith in charms, amulets and talismans contradict true belief in Allah's Ruboobeeyah (Lordship) by attributing to created objects the power to avert evil and bring good fortune. Islam opposed all manifestations of such beliefs which appeared in Arabia during the time of the last Prophet (PBUH) in order to establish a foundation on the basis of which similar beliefs and practices would also be condemned and prohibited, whenever and wherever they later appeared. Such beliefs, in fact, provide the ideological basis for idol worship in most pagan societies and the charms themselves represent a branch of idolatry. This relationship can be easily seen in the Catholic branch of Christianity, wherein, Prophet Jesus is deified, his mother Mary and Saints are worshipped; and pictures, statues and medallions with their imagined likenesses are kept and worn for good fortune.

When people accepted Islam during the Prophet's (PBUH) time, they often carried with them faith in charms collectively known in Arabic as Tamaa'im (sing Tameemah). Consequently, there are many recorded statements of the Prophet (PBUH) in which he strictly forbade such practices. The following are only a few examples:

**'Emrann ibn Husayn reported that when the Prophet (PBUH) saw a brass bangle on a man's upper arm, he said to him, "Woe be on you! What is this?" The man replied that it was to protect him from a sickness called al-Waahinah (Lit. weakness - possibly referring to Arthritis). The Prophet then said, "Cast it off, for verily it would only increase your weakness. And, if you died with it on, you would never succeed."** (Collected by Ahmed, Ibn Maajah and Ibn Hibbaan.)

Thus, the wearing of copper, brass or iron bracelets, bangles, and rings by the sick or the healthy in the belief that they will avert or cure sicknesses is strictly forbidden. Such practices with Haraam (forbidden) cures about which the Prophet (PBUH) had said, **"Treat each other's sicknesses, but do not treat sicknesses with forbidden things."** (Collected by Abu Daawood)

Abu Waaqid al-Laythee also reported that when Allah's messenger (PBUH) set out for Hunayn (the last major battle between the Prophet (PBUH) and Arabian pagan tribes), they passed by a tree called Dhaatu Anwaar (Lit. 'That which has things hanging on it'). The idolaters used to hang their weapons on its branches for good fortune. Some of the Sahaabah who were new in Islam asked the Prophet (PBUH) to designate a similar tree for them. **The Prophet (PBUH) replied, "Subhaanallah! (May Allah be glorified!) This is just like what Moses' people said to him; 'Make a god for us just like their gods!' (Quran: Al-Araaf 7:138). By the One in**  
**The Islamic Bulletin**

**whose hand rests my soul, all of you will follow the path of those before you."** (Collected by at-Tirmidhee, an Nasaa'ee and Ahmad)

## RULING ON CHARMS

As was previously mentioned, the prohibition on amulets, talismans and charms is not limited to the Arabian forms opposed by the Prophet (PBUH). Wherever objects are used for the same purpose, this prohibition also applies. The use of a variety of charms is widespread in Western society today, in spite of its technological advancements and its scientific achievements. Many talismans have become so interwoven in everyday life that few people stop to think about them, yet, when their origins are exposed, the Shirk, which lies at their base, becomes quite obvious. The following are only two examples of popular talismans in Western Society:

### THE RABBIT'S FOOT



The hind paws of rabbits or gold and silver replicas of the hind paws are worn on chains and bracelets as good luck charms by millions in the West. The origin of this belief is based on the rabbit's habit of thumping their hind legs on the ground. According to the ancients, they talked with the underground spirits when they thumped the ground. Hence, the paws were saved as means of conveying one's wishes to the spirits as well as instruments for bringing good luck in general.

### HORSESHOES



Many houses in America have horseshoes nailed over their doors, miniature versions are also worn on charm bracelets, key chains or necklaces, in the belief that they will bring good luck. The origin of this belief can be found in ancient Greek mythology. In ancient Greece, horses were considered sacred animals. If a horseshoe was hung over the door of a house, it was thought to bring good fortune. The open end of the horseshoe had to point upward, though, so it would hold the good luck. If it pointed downward, they believed that the good luck would spill out.

The belief in charms gives created things the divine power to avert misfortune and thus, those who subscribe to such beliefs contend that Allah's Ruboobeeyah (Lordship) is limited by His creation. In fact, they consider the charms to be more powerful than Allah, because the charms are thought to be able to prevent misfortune which Allaah has destined. Therefore, the belief in charms is an obvious form of Shirk, as ibn Mas'oud had said in the previously mentioned Hadeeth. This ruling is further strengthened by the following Hadeeth.

**'Uqbah ibn Aamir reported that when a group of ten men came to the Prophet (PBUH) he only accepted the oath of allegiance from nine. They asked, "O Messenger of Allah, why did you take the covenant from nine of us and refuse this man?" The Prophet (PBUH) answered, "Verily he has a talisman on him." The man then put his hand in his clock, pulled out the talisman and broke it. When the Prophet (PBUH) finished taking the oath from him he turned and said; "Whoever wears a talisman has committed Shirk!"** (Collected by at-Tirmidhee and Ahmad)

This area may seem quite insignificant for so much fuss to be made about it. Islam, however, puts stress on this area because it represents the seed from which Major Shirk may grow. The worship of idols, men, stars, etc, did not come about at one instant in time. Man's belief in Allah's unity, was gradually eroded as the seed of Major shirk took root and grew. Thus, Islam, by providing guidance in all aspects of human life, tries to root out the evils seeds before they can take root and destroy the very foundation of a Muslim's belief.



## ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS

### BENEFITS OF HONEY



Honey is abluent and an aperient. It contains detergent and tonic properties that cleanse the arteries and bowels of impurities. It opens obstructions of the liver, kidney and bladder. It is also a general preservative, and it helps to preserve the potency of salves among other natural medicinal remedies. Honey also helps to break up excess moisture in the bowels, such as in diarrhea. Honey is superior to sugar in many respects, and it is less sweet but stronger, and if taken excessively, it can be harmful to the bile, unless it is mixed with vinegar.

Honey is good for the aged; it is a cough suppressant and is used in medicine to treat corrupted phlegm in the stomach and to soften the general constitution of the body. Honey is also a curative for a depraved appetite, and when taken as a drink mixed with hot water and a pomace made from sweet roses, it helps the treatment of rabies, and is considered a safeguard from further infections. Honey is also used as detoxicant for drug users, and as an antitoxin to treat accidental eating of poisonous plants of the nightshade family (*Hyoscyamus niger*), or wild fungus, among others. When taken as a drink mixed with hot water only, it helps as a remedy for dog bites. As a preservative, honey can be used to preserve meat for up to three months, and is used in pickling cucumbers, squash, eggplant, and various kinds of fruits for up to six months. Known as "the trustworthy preservative", honey was also used as a principle ingredient in embalming the dead.

Spreading natural raw honey over one's hair as ointment will cure head lice and other parasites. It also can be used as hair softener, conditioner, and it promotes hair growth. Using it as an eye salve, honey brightens one's vision, while brushing one's teeth with honey whiten's them. And when used as mouthwash, it strengthens the gums and eliminates gum diseases. Honey's natural properties also make it an excellent replenisher and a solvent; it opens the pores of blood vessels and eases menstrual discharge, forces out phlegm, and opens obstruction of the liver, kidney and bladder. Honey indeed has great nutritional value and is the drink of drinks, a sweetener of sweeteners, an ointment of ointments, and there is no other food among what God Almighty has created for us that equals honey value, and nothing is close to its constitution.

People knew honey from ancient times and long before they began to process refined sugar. In fact, ancient physicians spoke extensively of honey, and sugar was never mentioned in their writings. As a high-metabolic food, potent and a stimulant, sugar is not fully soluble, and it produces an attenuated healing energy in the body that also subsides rapidly. Such rapidly mounting energy leaves the body with the hard work of eliminating the balance of insoluble molecules, and of rebuilding the interior walls of the arteries affected by the abrasion caused by the passage of such molecules in the blood stream. However, sugar is more relaxing for the stomach, and is less sweet than honey and less vehement.

### REGULATING BOWL MOVEMENT

It is narrated by Abi Sai'd Al-Khidri in the traditions that a man came to the Prophet (pbuh) and reported that his brother was complaining of irregular bowel movement. The Prophet (pbuh) advised:

**"Make him drink honey." The man came back the next day and said: "I made him drink honey and it did not help! The Prophet (pbuh) gave the same advice for two or three times, and the man kept coming back with the same answer. After the third or fourth time, The Prophet (pbuh) then said: "God spoke the truth, and your brother's belly lies." The same tradition was reported in Sahih Muslim wherein the man said: "My brother's belly is squeamish." - Meaning that he is nauseous, feels queasy, and that his digestive system is upset. (Reported in Sahih Bukhari)**

The Prophet (pbuh) used to sometimes drink an infusion of water sweetened with honey on an empty stomach, and such a custom holds ample benefits and subtle secrets. Ibn Maja noted a prophetic saying narrated by Abu Huraira (R.A.), that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Who-soever eats honey (at least) three times per month will meet with no great affliction."

In another tradition, the Prophet (pbuh) said: **"Make use of the two remedies: Honey and the Qur'an."**

In this saying, he (pbuh) linked human medicine and divine medicine; remedies for the body and those of the soul; the natural factor and the spiritual one; and, the earthly medicine and the heavenly one. Once this is understood, we go back to the case history we mentioned earlier, of the man who inquired about a cure for his brother's bowel problems, and the remedy prescribed by The Prophet (pbuh). In this particular case, the cause of the brother's constipation and suffering was due to excess food consumption and excess appetite that produced a dyspeptic condition or acute indigestion.

The Prophet (pbuh) asked him to give his brother a drink of honey to loosen and aid the excretion of waste. As this constipation was caused by overeating for an extended period of time, his stomach lining was coated with a mucus or asebiferous substance that caused slackness of the stomach tissues and obstructed the secretion of nutrients, for the stomach has a velvet lining, with short dense, and upright hair, just like those of a towel. When such viscous substance clings to the lining, it obstructs the normal cycle of digestion and spoils the food. Thus, taking in a natural abulent and an aperient, such as honey, is the best of remedies, and particularly when mixed with warm water.

The medicinal purpose behind repeating the treatment has an important therapeutic value, whereby the 'right medicine' must have the correct quantity and concentration to be effective. When the medicine falls short of satisfying such conditions, it will fail, and when it exceeds the required potency, it will weaken the coyd and cause the other harm. Hence, when the Prophet (PBUH) prescribed a second and then a third application of the treatment, he implies that the condition was acute and needed further treatment, and eventually the condition passed. When the Prophet (PBUH) said to the man: **"God Spoke the truth, and your brother's belly lies"**, he reiterated his position that honey was the right medicine for his brother's condition, and that his 'stomach mind' kept on denying it until the medicine eventually took effect.

In fact, the medicine of the Prophet (PBUH) is most credible and candid, and it is based on the divine inspiration (wahi), the prophetic focus (Mishkatu - Nubuwwa), and a brilliant reasoning ('aql), while most doctors' diagnoses are based on intuition, conjecture, and experiment, and they cannot refute the proven effectiveness of the prophetic medicine. However, in general, one who accepts it, believes in its healing nature adheres to it with faith, and voluntarily and happily submits to its curing effects, will recover from his illness by God's leave. The same principle guides the believers when God Almighty says of the holy Qur'an: **"A cure for the diseases of the hearts."** (Qur'an 10:57)

Thus, when its admonition is not received with that kind of faith, it will not cure such diseases. Rather, it will increase the profanity of the impious ones, broaden the hypocrisy of the ostentatious ones and compound their illnesses - even if they make use of the prescribed prophetic medicine, for unfailingly, the prophetic medicine will agree most with the obedient body of a true worshiper who is blessed with faith; and similarly, the medicine of the Holy Qur'an will cure the illness of blessed souls and living hearts. Hence, those who take exception to the prophetic medicine will not benefit from it, just as those who argue against the remedies of the holy Qur'an cannot benefit from them. This is no fault of the medicine, but rather their spiritless character, their defilement of the sacred abode of the heart, and contempt against God's Message.

God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: **"From its belly comes forth a drink of varying colors, wherein is a cure for people. Surely there is a sign for those who would give thought."** (Qur'an 16:69)

Surely God is the guardian of success, and He is the All-Knowing Lord.



## RAMLAH BINT ABU SUFYAN

Abu Sufyan ibn Harb could not conceive of anyone among the Quraysh who would dare challenge his authority or go against his orders. He was after all, the sayyid or chieftain of Makkah who had to be obeyed and followed.

His daughter, Ramlah, known as Umm Habibah, however dared to challenge his authority when she reflected the deities of the Quraysh and their idolatrous ways. Together with her husband, Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh, she put her faith in Allah alone and accepted the message of His prophet, Muhammad ibn Abdullah.

Abu Sufyan tried with all the power and force at his disposal to bring back his daughter and her husband to his religion and the religion of their forefathers. But he did not succeed. The faith which was embedded in the heart of Ramlah was too strong to be uprooted by the hurricanes of Abu Sufyan's fury.

Abu Sufyan remained deeply worried and concerned by his daughter's acceptance of Islam. He did not know how to face the Quraysh after she had gone against his will and he was clearly powerless to prevent her from following Muhammad (PBUH).

When the Quraysh realized though that Abu Sufyan himself was enraged by Ramlah and her husband, they were emboldened to treat them harshly. They unleashed the full fury of their persecution against them to such a degree that life in Makkah became unbearable.

In the 5th year of his mission, the Prophet (SAW) gave permission to the Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia. Ramlah, her little daughter Habibah, and her husband were among those who left.

Abu Sufyan and the Quraysh leaders found it difficult to accept that a group of Muslims had slipped out of their net of persecution and was enjoying the freedom to hold their beliefs and practice their religion in the land of the Negus. They therefore sent messengers to the Negus to seek their extradition.

The messengers tried to poison the mind of the Negus against the Muslims but after examining the Muslims' beliefs and listening to the Qur'an being recited, the Negus concluded.

"What has been revealed to your Prophet Muhammad, and what Jesus the son of Mary preached came from the same source."

The Negus himself announced his faith in the one true God and his acceptance of the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). He also announced his determination to protect the Muslim muhajjirin.

The long journey on the road of hardship and tribulation had finally

led to the oasis of serenity. So Umm Habibah felt, but she did not know that the newfound freedom and sense of peace were later to be shattered. She was to be put through a test of the most severe and harrowing kind.

One night, it is related, as Umm Habibah was asleep she had a vision in which she saw her husband in the midst of a fathomless ocean covered by wave upon wave of darkness. He was in a most perilous situation. She woke up, frightened, but she did not wish to tell her husband or anyone else what she had seen.

The day after that ominous night was not yet through when Ubaydallah ibn Jahsh announced his rejection of Islam and his acceptance of Christianity. What a terrible blow! Ramlah's sense of peace was shattered. She did not expect this of her husband who presented forthwith with the choice of a divorce or of accepting Christianity.

Umm Habibah had three options before her. She could either remain with her husband and accept his call to become a Christian in which case she also would commit apostasy and -God forbid- deserve ignominy in this world and punishment in the hereafter. This was something she resolved she would never do even if she were subjected to the most horrible torture. Or, she could return to her father's house in Makkah - but she knew he remained a citadel of shirk and she would be forced to live under him subdued and suppressing her faith. Or, she could stay alone in the land of the Negus as a displaced fugitive without country, without family and without a supporter.

She made the choice that she considered was the most pleasing to God. She made up her mind to stay in Abyssinia until such time as God granted her relief. She divorced her husband who lived only shortly after becoming a Christian. He had given himself over to frequenting wine merchants and consuming alcohol, the 'mother of evils'. This undoubtedly helped to destroy him.

Umm Habibah stayed in Abyssinia for about ten years. Towards the end of this time, relief and happiness came. It came from an unexpected quarter.

One morning bright and early, there was a loud knocking on her door. It was Abrahah, the special maid servant of the Negus. Abrahah was beaming with joy as she greeted Umm Habibah and said:

"The Negus sends his greetings and says to you that Muhammad, the Messenger of God (PBUH), wants you to marry him and that he has sent a letter in which he has appointed him as his wakil to contract the marriage between you and him. If you agree you are to appoint a wakil to act on your behalf."

Umm Habibah was in the clouds with happiness. She shouted to herself: "God had given you glad tidings."

She took off her jewelry - her necklace and bracelets - and gave them to Abrahah. She took off her rings too and gave them to her. And indeed if she had possessed all the treasures of the world she would have given them to Abrahah at that moment of sheer joy.

Finally she said to Abrahah: "I appoint Khalid ibn al-Aas to act as wakil on my behalf for his is the closest person to me."

In the palace of the Negus, set in the midst of beautiful gardens and luxuriant vegetation and in one of the lavishly decorated, sumptuously furnished and brightly lit halls, the group of Muslims living in Abyssinia gathered. They included Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, Khalid ibn Sa'id, Abdullah ibn Hudhafah as-Sahmi and others.

They had gathered to witness the conclusion of the marriage contract between Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, and Muhammad, the Messenger of God. When the marriage was finalized, the Negus addressed the gathering:

"I praise God, the Holy, and I declare that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his Servant and His messenger and that He gave the good tidings to Jesus the son of Mary."

The Messenger of God (PBUH) has requested me to conclude the marriage contract between him and Umm Habibah the daughter of Abu Sufyan. I agreed to do what he requested and on his behalf I give her a mahr or dowry of four hundred gold dinars."

He handed, over the amount to Khalid ibn Sa'id who stood up and said: "All praise is due to God. I praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness and I turn to Him in repentance. I declare that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger whom he has sent the religion of guidance and truth so that it might prevail over all other forms of religion even if the disbelievers were to dislike this.

"I have agreed to do what the Prophet (PBUH) has requested and acted as the wakil on behalf of Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan. May God bless His Messenger and his wife.

"Congratulations to Umm Habibah on account of the goodness which God has ordained for her."

Khalid took the mahr and handed it over to Umm Habibah. The Sahabah thereupon got up and prepared to leave but the Negus said to them: "Sit down for it is the practice of the Prophets to serve food at marriages."

There was general rejoicing at the court of the Negus as the guests sat down again to eat and celebrate the joyous occasion. Umm Habibah especially could hardly believe her good fortune and she later described how she was eager to share her happiness.

She said: "When I received the money as mahr, I sent fifty mithqals of gold to Abrahah who had brought me the good news and I said so her: 'I gave you what I did when you gave me the good news because at that time I did not have any money.'

"Shortly afterwards, Abrahah came to me and returned the gold. She also produced a case which contained the necklace I had given to her. She returned that to me and said: 'The King has instructed me not to take anything from you and he has commanded the women in his household to present you with gifts of perfume.'"

On the following day she brought me ambergris, saffron and aloes and said: 'I have a favor to ask of you.' 'What is it?' I asked. 'I have accepted Islam', she said, 'and now follow the religion of Muhammad. Convey to him my salutation of peace and let him know that I believe in Allah and His Prophet. Please don't forget.' She then helped me to get ready for my journey to the Prophet.

"When I met the Prophet (PBUH) I told him all about the arrangements that were made for the marriage and about my relationship with Abrahah. I told him she had become a Muslim and conveyed to him her greetings of peace. He was filled with joy at the news and said 'Wa alayha as-salam wa rahmatullahi was barakatuhu' - and on her be peace and the mercy and blessings of God."

## WHY I EMBRACED ISLAM

### AN ANGLICAN PRIEST WHO ACCEPTED ISLAM

Dr. M.H. Durran



Thirty years ago, at a very young age, I became a Christian under the influence of a Mission School.

I have spent most of my life in the Church of England as an Anglican Priest since 1939 to 1963. Islam came to me as the spring. Thus I came back to the fold of the religion of my forefathers i.e. Islam.

The cause of my coming back to the fold of Islam was the inspiration given to me through a dream wherein I seemed to have been blessed with the personal blessings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Now I praise God and his holy Prophet and I am overjoyed to have found the Prophet, peace be upon him, the savior of the sinners.

A change of heart comes from Almighty God. In fact, without His guidance all our learning, all our searching and all our efforts to find the truth may even lead us astray.

We need conviction without which no argument howsoever skillful, neither any eloquence howsoever impassioned, nor learning howsoever deep will ever make a man satisfied unless he has the proof within his own soul. The only way to have it is to receive it as a gift of God.

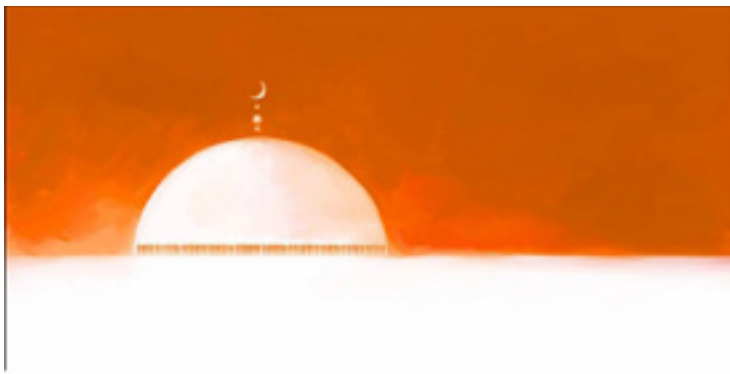
Now the point that I had especially to emphasize is that each one of us has a guiding vision; if we follow it faithfully, it will bring us satisfaction. At one time or other, whether it be during youth-in the prime of our life or in old age, even one has a dream, a vision and inspiration, an ideal, a sense of a finger pointing at him, of a voice calling upward to higher life. This is the way, walk ye in it.

We may not be able to explain it but God fulfills Himself in many ways. He sends to each a vision which each one can understand...

There is a light that shines into a man's soul when he realizes for the first time the high and solemn purposes of life. Can't you remember such an experience, when in some moment of depression and disillusionment your whole soul cried out in revolt against the futility, the emptiness, the dreary monotony of your existence?

God has created me, you said to yourself, for nothing better than this; to get up in the morning; and go to work, to serve the Bully ragging employer who gets the best work out of his men or to slave at a desk or in a shop, to face the endless fret and worry of how to make both ends meet?





Surely life has something more satisfying to offer than this. I have an intellect, a soul, a personality, some independence of character, some capacity for high achievement, but it is all being crushed out of one by the cruel tyranny of petty circumstances. And then, amidst the dark night of your depression, there shone out suddenly, a gleaming star of hope. You caught a vision of what your life was meant to be and might be.

Through some word of scripture, through the voice of some preacher, through the haunting cadence of some remembered poem God spoke to your soul. He opened your eyes to see the inner meaning and purpose of your work. He showed you that the routine, the drudgery, the hardship, which seemed to be slowly pressing life out of you, were in reality these instruments for the formation of your character, his opportunities for the unselfish service of your fellowmen.

What a wonderful difference it makes to a man's whole outlook when he grasps the great truth that life is a vacation, a call to make his little corner of the world a better, brighter, sweeter, happier place.

What a power there is in simple goodness, to draw men heavenward: words may be interpreted, but the light that radiates from a soul trying to live up to the highest, touches and blesses all who come near him.

That is the debt we owe to the Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

I venture to say there is not single convert who does not owe his gratitude to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, help, guidance, inspiration and as the example of a good person whom God in his great love has sent to us to follow.

Again we may have all experienced not once but many times the same world, same example, same deep inward inspiration, arousing us out of our lethargy and indifference awaking within us the spirit of divine discontent, bidding us to gird our loins to journey forth on the road that leads to God. Thank God, I was not disobedient unto the Heavenly Vision.

### WAYS HOME:

Homeward we are often led along the strange ways, unexpected turnings take us back to by-gone days suddenly, we go astray, though straight the track appears, and we find we have struck the road of the forgotten years.

I have eventually taken up the study of the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). I realized that it is a great sin to condemn that holy man of God who established the kingdom of God among the people who were unruly wayfarers, idol worshippers and doers of all kinds of disgraceful things. He not only changed their modes of thought, their habits and their morals, but also brought them under one banner, one law, one religion, one culture, one civilization and

one form of government.

That nation, which had not produced a single great man worth the name for centuries, gave birth under his influence and guidance to thousands of noble souls, who went forth to far off corners of the world, to preach and teach the principles of Islam, morality and codes of living.

He fulfilled his mission not through any worldly lure, oppression or tyranny, but by his captivating manners, his endearing moral personality and his convincing teachings. With his noble and gentle behavior he befriended even his enemies. He won the hearts of the people by his love.

When he began preaching, the ignorant nation turned against him. Abuses and stones were showered at his august person. Every conceivable torture and cruelty was perpetrated on him. This continued not for a day or two but uninterruptedly for thirteen long troublesome years. At last he is exiled, but he is not given respite even there. He is tormented in various ways in his abode of refuge. The whole of Arabia is incited against him.

He is harassed and thwarted continuously for full eight years there. He suffered it all, but he did not budge an inch from the stand he had taken. He was resolute, firm and inflexible in his purpose and stand. His nation had offered to accept him as its kind and to lay all the riches of the land at his feet if only he would leave preaching his religion and spreading his message. But he chose to refuse the tempting offers and to suffer for his cause instead.

Why? Why was it that he cared not a jot for riches and luxury, kingship and glory and ease and plenty? One has to ponder over it deeply to find an answer.

Can any one imagine a higher example of self-sacrifice, fellow-feeling and kind heartedness towards his fellow beings than that a man ruin his own happiness for the good of others, while those for whose betterment he is striving his utmost should stone him, abuse him, banish him and gave him no quarter even in his exile, and that inspire of it all he should refuse to abstain from striving for their well being?

Can any sincere person undergo so much suffering for a false cause? Can any dishonest speculator and visionary exhibit such firmness and determination for his ideal as to stick to his guns to the very last and remain insufferable and unperturbed in the face of dangers and tortures of every conceivable description when a whole country rises up in arms against him?

This faith, this perseverance and this resolution with which he led his movement to ultimate success, therefore, an eloquent proof of the supreme truth of his cause. Had there been the slightest touch of doubt and uncertainty in his mind, he could have never been able to brave the storm which continued in all its fury for twenty three long years.

What more proof of perfect honesty of purpose, up-rightness of character and sublimity of soul can there be? Who else can be a more truthful person than he who received such unique gifts and embellishments through a secret channel and still be outrightly pointed out, the source of all his enlightenment and inspiration?

All these factors lead to the irresistible conclusion that such a man was the true Messenger of God. Such was our Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. He was a prodigy of extraordinary merits, a paragon of virtue and goodness, a symbol of truth and veracity, a great apostle of God.

He was a Messenger to the entire world.

## And the winner is... TELEVISION!



In the race to impact the lives of our children, it is not the family, or the school, or the masjid that is light years ahead of the rest - it is television. Spend a day watching TV with children and you'll find out who they want to meet and be like, what types of foods they want to eat, which toys they would like to play with, and how they want their next haircut.

Children spend more time in front of TV than they do in school. It molds their morals, personality and character. Their physical health, sleeping habits and literacy skills are affected by it. Today the only thing many children do more than watch TV is sleep but soon that too may change.

In the face of such a massive cultural and psychological attack, what's happening to our children? More than 95% of Muslim parents do not take their children to masjids and Islamic centers. The 'Islamic' education at home is often no more than a conducting mixture of culture, superstition and the Truth. The minds of our children are engulfed in an ocean of un-Islamic values that are constantly promoted on television, in magazines, on billboards and in the lives of their school friends. Islam offers them little or no protection.

Let's face it, the majority of our children learn more about Islam and Muslims from the media than anywhere else. They see Islam presented as something foreign, mysterious and, at times, something evil. By entrusting our children to the one-eyed babysitter we have practically guaranteed that they will see homosexuality presented as something normal and the religion of Allah as evil.

Despite its positive traits, television is robbing children of their very identity-right in our own homes... How can any of us not fear for our survival when our children know more about Michael Jackson and Madonna than Muhammad and Musa (Peace be upon them)?

Since most programs are designated for adults, letting them watch TV without our being there is the worst thing we can do. Dinner, homework and the like should not take place in front of the tube. Encourage your child to read and to take part in outdoor activities, even if it means giving up some of your own leisure time.

## THE MIRACLES OF THE QURAN

### THE QURAN AS A PRECEPT AND DISCIPLINE FOR LIFE

#### Doubt and Existence

Islam is either a belief, and hence a religion, or not a belief, and therefore hypocrisy. But before we begin our discussion we must first define the meaning of the word, 'belief'. In essence, belief is a cause that develops steadily in the heart until it reaches full maturity and turns into a firm faith and certainty. Once it has reached this stage, it never emerges to the mind to be discussed or reviewed anew. If we ever recall it to mind, then something is amiss with our faith. This lack of sincere faith is pointed out in Allah's comment about the desert Arabs who profess Islam only to gain some favors, as is revealed in the following verses:

**"The wandering Arabs say: We believe. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): You believe not, but rather say "We submit", for the faith has not yet entered into your hearts..." (Quran al-Hujarat 49:14)**

It appears, therefore, that true faith entails a firm conviction so deeply entranced in the heart and soul that it can never re-emerge to our conscious mind to be discussed, or subjected to our senses. Its place is not the various areas of sense faculties or the material world in which it lives; the true realm and test for faith is the world of the Unseen. It is a world which is invisible and cannot be reached by our physical sense. We therefore customarily identify faith with innate certainty, as if we actually saw the object of faith.

An example of this innate certainty is expressed when one sometimes says, "I am sure such-and-such will happen." You seem to see the event as clearly as you see your image in a mirror. But what you predict is hidden from you and could materialize or not, and you cannot guarantee its occurrence. But trusting your faith, your prediction seems to be as real as the world you can actually see and feel. If this is how far you are willing to go in your faith about trivial worldly matter, then surely your faith in the existence of Allah ought to be much greater, and you must worship Him as if you actually saw Him. It is not important if we do not actually see Him, because He sees us. And if we consider worship to be synonymous with seeing Him, then seeing is no longer a controversial issue, for once faith is subjected to controversy and mental debate it loses its true meaning and essence. In as much as it is debated in the mind, it is imperfect and incomplete.

The main objective of these debates is to confirm or deny the existence of Allah. Yet, if you ask anyone who supports the case for the existence of Allah about the notices which prompted him to seek such evidence and why he became involved in such a painstaking task, requiring a great deal of mental energy and dedication, profound reflection and insight, he would certainly say that he was propelled by an inborn and persistent feeling that Allah was inside him.

Indeed Allah resides naturally in those who believe in Him, obey Him and follow His right way, as well as in those who, though they wallow in wrong-direction and self-indulgence, can nevertheless feel Him in them, and are constantly perturbed by the awesome penalty they know awaits them on the Day of Judgement. They are in constant terror of that Day, which they instinctively know will come, and try desperately to ease the torment of their souls and to escape their dilemma by inveighing against Him and His divine Justice, and disputing it with vain argument.

It is obvious; therefore, that those who try to provide evidence as to the existence of Allah have in fact confirmed it without the necessity of any concrete proof. For in their striving to find proof lays the proof. The quest for this evidence and the mental effort that is expended indicated that their inborn faculties are in no doubt of His existence. We can sense Him and know that He is all around them. Surely the

awareness of Allah's existence must have been present when the attempts for confirming evidence began. In these attempts, which are likely to continue till the end of time, is embedded the implicit acknowledgement of His existence.

Man, by nature can only produce evidence within his mental capacity. If we therefore thoroughly study the divine messages we will soon discover that the most important and significant evidence concerning Allah's existence is presented in a way that is most commensurate with mankind's past, present, and future mental capacities, with surpassing accuracy and detail.

If we investigate Allah's knowledge, we will find that it is imparted to man through the association between words and their meanings **in the mind, as stated in the verse, "And He taught Adam all the names..." (Quran al-Baqarah 2:31)** i.e. that Allah has taught Adam the nature of all things and their names. Afterwards, He called the angels and asked them to inform Him of these names, but they could not and replied that they had none except that which He had taught them.

We infer from the above that meaning ought to be defined first, or that a thing should be found and clearly defined and perceived by the learner or listener, before it can be given a name which consolidates its shape in his mind. Thus, when we say the word 'house' there is a meaning for it in our memory.

If, for example, you mentioned the word 'mountain' to a man who had never seen a mountain, he would not understand what you meant, no matter how hard you tried to explain it to him. The nomads who live in the deserts, isolated from the modern world, can never understand, or even imagine, what a television looks like.

Yet there is no man on earth who does not know the meaning of the word 'Allah', no matter how ignorant and isolated from civilization he is. He understands it as the mighty power that created this universe and exercises total control over man's activities and fate. But how can man understand the meaning of the word when he has not seen Him?

The answer is that if his inborn instincts did not tell him that Allah was lodged in his heart and soul he would never have understood the meaning of the word, nor would it have acquired that universal meaning which lives in harmony with mankind. It is, indeed, our faith in His existence which makes us understand the meaning of the word 'Allah', for; all those things that are not registered in our memory and mind are meaningless.

If we consult the different dictionaries of all languages we will find that they contain only words which name well-defined and existing objects. They are revised periodically so that new words for newly found objects are added. It is therefore essential that a thing must be found before a new name for it devised. In fact, there is in every country a body of professional linguists whose main task is to revise their language and supplement it with new words and terms for newly-discovered things and meanings.

But the fact that the word 'Allah' (or its equivalent) is found in all languages is a clear indication that He has never been far from man's thought; it provides the indisputable evidence that His existence preceded all His creation, as well as the development of any language. This universal agreement by all languages and all people about the meaning of the word 'Allah' and what it implies shows that the human mind knows Allah by instinct, even though it is beyond his power to see Him. This takes us back to the divine messages and the verse, in which Allah says,

**"And when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, verily. We testify. (That was) lest you should say at the Day of Resurrection! Lo! Of this we were unaware." (Quran al-A'raf 7:172)**

The above verse shows how Allah lives within us, although it is beyond our ability to see Him. This is the reason why His name *The Islamic Bulletin*

never sounds unfamiliar or meaningless when we hear it spoken.

We are always sensitive to its sound and can feel its echo within us. We are quite aware of the power it signifies, and know that life cannot be harmonious without our feeling that He is close to us.

There are millions of illiterates who have very little worldly knowledge, and will accept with doubt and skepticism any explanation you may give about them, but there is not one single person in this universe, young or old, literate or illiterate who is ignorant of the meaning of the word 'Allah'.

It is not uncommon for people to disagree about an issue or fail to understand its meaning, but not once has there been any discord among people about the existence of Allah and His mastery over this universe. They all acknowledge His sovereignty and worship Him.

This is the reason that when you enter one of Allah's houses you find men of all walks of life, who may be different in age, social class, education, customs and habits, sitting together, or engaged in worships glorifying Him in harmony and submissiveness. All these worshippers could not have gathered in this way unless they were motivated by their instinctive feeling that Allah truly resided in them.

As for those who try to deny Allah's existence, we say to them that their mere attempt to deny Him is in itself an acknowledgement of His existence. That is because no one need deny something that does not exist. For instance, a few centuries ago, some people asserted that the earth was flat, while others believed that it was spherical. If the earth did not appear to be flat for some, or if science had not proved it to be a sphere, no argument would have arisen.

This dispute developed, in the first place, because of the conflict between what was actually visible and the scientific theory before it has been proven, otherwise we would be debating nothing. It is, therefore, logical to say that the attempts to deny the existence of Allah must have begun when it became evident that He truly existed; otherwise, why should any nonbeliever try to deny Him? If Allah was not truly there, whom then, were they trying to deny?

To cast any doubt about Allah is tantamount to admitting His existence and defeated their own purpose. For looking for such evidence must necessarily bear an implicit acknowledgement of His presence, and all mental effort expended in its confirmation or denial could not have emerged out of nothing.

If we accept the conclusion that Allah is in us naturally and that all believers and non-believers alike can sense His presence, in their hearts and souls, then it follows that those who deny Him do so because they fear Him and are apprehensive of his wrath, and therefore try to alleviate their anxiety by convincing themselves that heaven and hell, reward and punishment are but the invention of man's own thoughts, and are non-existent.

Despite this defiance and self-deception they are constantly haunted by their subconscious fear of the Hereafter and the Day when they will stand before Allah and give account of all their deeds. They know no peace of mind and are always miserable and scared, no matter how secure and confident they may seem about the present.

This would all be incomplete without reflecting upon Allah's discipline and His right way to discover the reasons which make some people avoid them and whether or not they do so because His way does not provide equal justice and happiness for all men.

Why does man always try to seek a different way, which he sometimes describes as contemporary thought or modern theories? Why does he run away from Allah? Allah has set restrictions upon human desires. These limits have not been set forth in favor of one specified group or another, but rather for the welfare of the whole of mankind. But human ambition and desires know no bounds. Man wants to give full reign to his instincts, despite his knowledge of their harmful repercussions on himself and on the society. For example, he is obsessed with a desire to possess everything. His greed drives him to possess the riches of the world if he could, and always to covet



other people's possessions. He seems oblivious of the fact that this life on this earth is temporal and that no one could ever make use of all his amassed wealth in that short period, nor take one little bit of it with him when he leaves it. But why does man struggle to hoard wealth for its own sake?

The reason is that his greed makes him oblivious to the certainty of death; he is hopeful of cheating death at least until he has satisfied all his desires. This false hope is referred to in Muhammad's (SAW) hadith wherein he says: **'I have not seen a conviction that is equal to doubt as the certainty about death.'**

In His wisdom and cherishing care, Allah has been careful to curb the lust for possession, by condemning the acquisition by unlawful means or false pretenses of another person's properties and possessions. He established these laws to protect every member of society, and to teach us to observe the rights of others.

Thus He forbids us to acquire wealth by unlawful means, to touch an orphan's property or to take personal advantage of it if we are appointed as guardian over him and so on.

Through these laws, Allah safeguards the rights of both the weak and the powerful. This balance although it may appear paradoxical, is unequivocally sound, because when Allah has forbidden us from coveting the property of others, He has also forbidden society as a whole from transgressing against its members or abusing their right.

He has protected the lawful rights of the weak from the strong. If Allah had permitted the strong to wrongfully seize the property of the weak, He would have given society access to the weak man's money and wealth.

Here we see Allah's justice. He protects the weak and shields the strong from the bias society. The legislation has been made to enhance the welfare of the whole of society and ensure its harmony.

He has also decreed that the rich should be charitable and allot some of their wealth to the poor so that the whole society can enjoy a peaceful life, purged from envy. Only in a healthy climate of this nature can fellowship, co-operation and concern for one another grow.

This is only one example of Allah's legislation. It has been set forth as a barrier against the greed of those who are obsessed with the uncontrollable desire to hoard wealth, regardless of the means of its acquisition or the persons they acquire it from; these laws have come to protect these same persons from their own shortcomings and lusts.

Regarding physical lust and the physical relationship between man and woman, we find that God has also established certain rules which ensure that this relationship does not become a source of corruption in society.

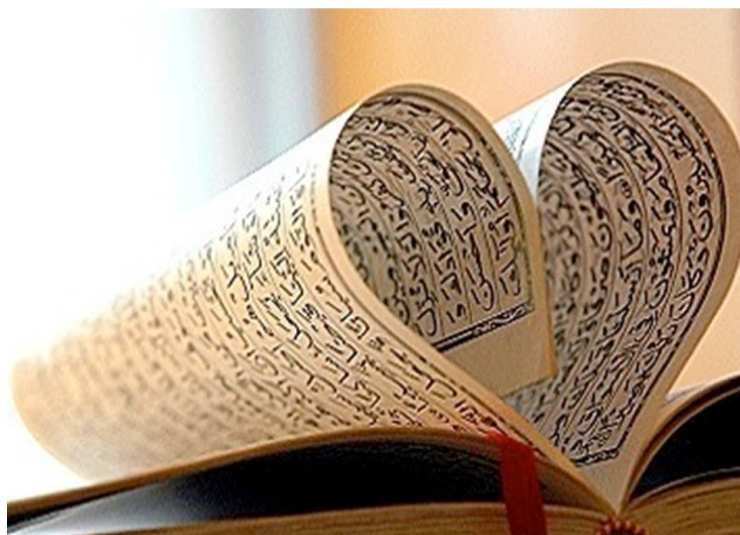
It is told that a man once came to Muhammad (SAW): and, after declaring his allegiance to him and professing his Islam, added that he was fond of women and could not restrain his desires, and asked the Prophet (SAW) if he was free to pursue this habit.

Muhammad (SAW) did not feel offended, nor did he chastise him. Instead he calmly and wisely explained to him the underlying purpose of the rules decreed by Allah on that issue, in a clear and instructive way that could be fully comprehended by the man.

He asked him if he would accept that his lust be practiced with his mother. This question seemed to offend the man and he said, 'No'. The Prophet continued, 'Would you accept it be done to your sister?' This second suggestion seemed to increase the man's anger and he vehemently answered, 'No'. But Muhammad ignored his outburst and said, 'Would you allow it to be committed with your wife?'

The man could not control his anger and shouted, 'Never, never!' Then Muhammad (SAW) concluded 'Neither do any of us, my Arab brother'.

With this simple dialogue Muhammad (SAW) was able to make the



foolish man realize that Allah's legislation were made to protect his mother, his sister and his wife from an act that no honest man who had any pride in himself would approve of.

If anyone paid heed to this dialogue before committing any act of adultery he would never indulge in such sin. The legislation has therefore come to refine our instincts and to protect the individual himself as well as his own kin. Through this legislation, Allah has shown us that all men are equal before Him and that His justice knows no discrimination or bias.

No one escaped His punishment if he breaks His laws; anyone is chastised if he embarks on a way of wrong-doing and corruption that endangers the fabric of society.

But there are persons who have no concern for others' interests and rights. They feel no remorse for cheating others and yet do not accept to be themselves cheated; they feel free to slander them, yet are immensely offended if they are slandered, forgetting that when God set forth His funding laws, He made no allowance for one over the other, no matter how strong and wealthy the former, or how poor and deprived the latter. His justice is even-handed and its primary aim is to ensure the welfare of society as a whole, and to protect mankind from its own destructive desires.

When Allah decrees anything, His ultimate purpose is to educate and refine the human self, to nurture its inner spiritual values and to inculcate in it the values of justice and concern for the rights of others, thereby elevating man above all other creatures, and at the same time laying down the foundation for a healthy society that is guided and governed in its interactions by these divine laws.

In His discipline, Allah lays down the foundation for the kind of society that can live in harmony on earth. He alone has the power to do this because His power transcends all human power and knowledge. He has created this universe and harnessed its forces for the service of man.

If Allah has created all these forces for the benefit of man, whose mental and physical powers are greatly limited, then He is better qualified to plan for him the perfect order for a righteous and happy life on this earth.

Man no matter how far his knowledge may reach or how vain and ambitious he may be, cannot pretend that he is better qualified than his Creator, nor can he match His skill in planning his own right way.

Man is not without ambition and desires, and these shortcomings are likely to leave their mark on any plan he might set out for Himself or for others.

In contrast, Allah is without ambition, and as His ultimate purpose is the welfare of whole of mankind, His plan is sure to be perfect and just.

# Stories Of The Sahabas



## ABDULLAH IBN SALLAM

Al-Husayn ibn Sallam was a Jewish rabbi in Yathrib who was widely respected and honored by the people of the city, even by those who were not Jewish. He was known for his piety and goodness, his upright conduct and his truthfulness.

Al-Husayn lived a peaceful and gentle life but he was serious, purposeful and organized in the way he spent his time. For a fixed period each day, he would teach and preach in the temple. Then he would spend some time in his orchard, looking after date palms, pruning and pollinating.

Thereafter, to increase his understanding and knowledge of his religion, he would devote himself to the study of the Torah. In this study, it is said, he was particularly struck by some verses of the Torah which dealt with the coming of a Prophet who would complete the message of previous Prophets.

Al-Husayn therefore took an immediate and keen interest when he heard reports of the appearance of a Prophet in Makkah. He said:

«When I heard of the appearance of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, I began to make inquiries about his name, his genealogy, his characteristics his time and place and I began to compare this information with what is contained in our books. From these enquiries, I became convinced about the authenticity of his Prophethood and I affirmed the truth of his mission. However, I concealed my conclusions from the Jews. I held my tongue...

Then came the day when the Prophet, peace be on him, left Makkah and headed for Yathrib. When he reached Yathrib and stopped at Quba, a man came rushing into the city calling out to people and announcing the arrival of the Prophet.

At that moment, I was at the top of a palm tree doing some work. My aunt Khalidah bint al-Harith, was sitting under the tree. On hearing the news, I shouted: 'Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!' 'God is Great! God is Great!'

When my aunt heard my takbir, she remonstrated with me:

'May God frustrate you ... By God, if you had heard that Moses was coming you would not have been more enthusiastic.'

'Auntie, he is really by God, the 'brother' of Moses and follows his religion. He was sent with the same mission as Moses.'

She was silent for a while and then said:

'Is he the Prophet about whom you spoke to us who would be sent to confirm the truth preached by previous (Prophets) and complete the message of his Lord?'

'Yes.' I replied.

Without any delay or hesitation, I went out to meet the Prophet. I saw crowds of people at his door. I moved about in the crowds until I reached close to him. The first words I heard him say were:

'O people! Spread peace ... Share food ... Pray during the night

while people (normally) sleep... and you will enter Paradise in peace...'

I looked at him closely. I scrutinized him and was convinced that his face was not that of an imposter. I went closer to him and made the declaration of faith that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

The Prophet turned to me and asked:

'What is your name?'

'Al-Husayn ibn Sallam,' I replied.

'Instead, it is (now) Abdullah ibn Sallam (it shall be). By Him who has sent you with the Truth, I do not wish to have another name after this day.'

I returned home and introduced Islam to my wife, my children and the rest of my household. They all accepted Islam including my aunt Khalidah who was then an old lady. However, I advised them then to conceal our acceptance of Islam from the Jews until I gave them permission. They agreed.

Subsequently, I went back to the Prophet, peace be on him and said:

'O Messenger of God! The Jews are a people (inclined to) slander and falsehood. I want you to invite their most prominent men to meet you. (During the meeting however), you should keep me concealed from them in one of your rooms. Ask them then about my status among them before they find out of my acceptance of Islam. Then invite them to Islam. If they were to know that I have become a Muslim, they would denounce me and accuse me of everything base and slander me.'

The Prophet kept me in one of his rooms and invited the prominent Jewish personalities to visit him. He introduced Islam to them and urged them to have faith in God... They began to dispute and argue with him about the Truth. When he realized that they were not inclined to accept Islam, he put the question to them:

'What is the status of Al-Husayn ibn Sallam among you?'

'He is our sayyid (Leader) and the son of our sayyid. He is our rabbi and our alim (scholar) the son of our rabbi and alim.'

'If you come to know that he has accepted Islam, would you accept Islam also?' asked the Prophet.

'God forbid! He would not accept Islam. May God protect him from accepting Islam,' they said (horrified).

At this point I came in full view of them and announced: 'O assembly of God! Be conscious of God and accept what Muhammad has brought. By God, you certainly know that he is the Messenger of God and you can find prophecies about him and mention of his name and characteristics in your Torah. I for my part declare that he is the Messenger of God. I have faith in him and believe that he is true. I know him.'

'You are a liar, they shouted. "By God, you are evil and ignorant, the son of an evil and ignorant person." They continued to heap every conceivable abuse on me...»

Abdullah ibn Sallam approached Islam with a soul thirsty for knowledge. He was passionately devoted to The Quran and spent much time reciting and studying its beautiful and sublime verses. He was deeply attached to the noble Prophet and was constantly in his company.

Much of his time he spent in the masjid engaged in worship, in learning and in teaching. He was known for his sweet, moving and effective way of teaching study circles of Sahabah who assembled regularly in the Prophet's mosque.

Abdullah ibn Sallam was known among the Sahabah as 'a man from ahl-al-Jannah' - the people of paradise. This was because of his determination of the advice of the Prophet to hold steadfastly to the 'most trustworthy handhold' that is belief in and total submission to God.



## A BRIEF LOOK INTO THE HISTORY OF EMBRYOLOGY

In order to evaluate the Embryological data in the Holy Quran, we have first to look into the human knowledge of this subject at the time when the Holy Quran was revealed to Mohammed (PBUH) 14 centuries ago, down to our time.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) wrote the first known treatise on embryology, in which he described the development of the chick and other embryos.

At this time there were already two theories concerning the development of embryos. Vis:

- a) Preformed in the male semen, or the female secretion in which they exist as miniature creatures which tend to grow inside the womb.
- b) Actual formation and creation from the menstrual blood.

Aristotle took sides with the second theory. The role of a male's semen in reproduction was limited to the role of a catalyst in which the menstrual blood coagulated. He actually said that it resembles the curdling of milk into cheese.

So great was the effect of Aristotle that nobody dared to challenge his views for many centuries. Redi in 1668 dealt a blow to this theory, and Pasteur 1864 wrote the final obituary to the doctrine of Spontaneous generation.

However, the Holy Quran and the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) challenged Aristotle, exactly 1100 years before Redi dared to put forward his theory.

In Sura 76 Verse 2 the Quran says: **"Verify we have created man from a drop of mingled liquids"** (of both male and the female).

The Prophet was asked by a Jew: "O Mohammed, tell me from what thing man is created". He replied, **"O Jew. Man is created from both the fluids of male and female."**

Ibn Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet, when asked to explain the above verse (Sura 76/2) said: **"the word Nutfatul Amshaq is the fluid of male and female intermingled and then it passes into many evolutionary stages."** (Tafsir Ibn Garir, Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

None of the exegetes (interpreters of the Holy Quran) differ on this point. All agree to the above explanation. However, the effect of Aristotle was so great in the medieval era that even Muslim philosophers and men of science and medicine took his views.

This led to the squabble between the Ulema ('clergy men' though in Islam there is no clergy as in other religions), and the Muslim physicians.

Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani who lived in the 14th century say, "Many of the anatomists claim that the semen of the male has no role in creation of the baby. Its role, they claim, is limited to curdling the menstrual blood from which man is born. The sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) deny what they say. The semen of the male actually participates equally to that of female in formation of the embryo."

We find the same discussion brought forward by Ibn Al-Qaim who lived in the 13th century.

Galen (the 2nd century A.D.) was probably the first man to write a book on the subject of embryology. His book was titled 'On the Formation of the Foetus'. Nevertheless he stuck to Aristotle's view (just explained).

In the Middle Ages the Holy Quran and the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) (570-632 A.D.), revealed many astonishing facts about the creation of man, especially in the field of embryology. These will be dealt with later in some detail.

Keith Moore in his book 'The Developing Human', 3rd Edition, mentioned few of these astonishing revelations as revealed in the Holy Quran.

Until the 18th century it was generally believed that a fully formed animal exists in miniature in the egg needing only the stimulus of the sperm to initiate growth and unfolding, or that similarly pre-formed organisms, male and female, constitute the sperms and these merely enlarge when they get inside the womb.

The original pre-formation theory was virtually destroyed by Wolff (1759-69) who described globules (cells) in the egg from which the embryo was built gradually, step by step, starting from the shapeless globules to the more complex human embryo. This phenomenon was called epigenesis. Many years elapsed before Wolff's views were accepted. The final blow to the original pre-formation doctrine was dealt by Driesch (1900) who separated daughter cells of a fertilized egg and allowed them to grow into complete embryos.

Pander in 1817 demonstrated the three primary germ layers in the chick embryo. Von Baer (1829-37) broadened this concept to all animals, and identified the human egg (150 years after Leeuwenhoek first discovered the human sperm). Von Baer was called the "Father of modern Embryology".

Cleavage, i.e. subdivision of the egg into building units of the embryo, was first described by Prevost and Dumas in 1824. However, its true meaning was not understood until Schwann and Schleiden (1839) put forward the doctrine of cells as being the biological units from which the whole body of animal or plant is built. Twenty years later the eggs and sperms were recognized as cells.

Hertwig in 1875 was the first to describe scientifically the fertilization of an egg by a sperm.

Von Benden 1883 proved that male and female cells contribute the same number of chromosomes to the embryo.

It is quite astonishing to find that the Holy Quran and the Prophet Mohammed (570-632) (PBUH) has stated emphatically that:

- 1) Both male and female contribute equally to the formation of human embryo.
- 2) That the human embryo is created in stages.

These facts are stated in the following verses and Hadith.

**"Verily we have created man from a drop of mingled fluids."** (Quran Sura 76/2)

The Prophet said: **"O Jew. Man is created from a drop of male semen and a drop of female secretion."**

**"What is amiss with you that you cannot look forward to God's Majesty. He has created (every one of) you in successive stages."** (Quran Sura 71/13-14)

**"We created man from the quintessence of mud. Thereafter we cause him to remain as a drop of sperm in a firm lodging (i.e. the womb). Thereafter we fashioned the sperm into something that clings (Alaqa), which we fashioned into a chewed lump (Modgha). The chewed lump is fashioned into bones which are then covered with flesh. Then we nurse him unto another act of creation. Blessed is God, the best of artisans."** (Quran Sura 23/12-14)

**"O Men! If you are in doubt as to the resurrection, remember that, We have created (everyone of) you out of dust, then out of a drop a semen, then from something that clings (Alaqa) then from a chewed like lump (Modgha), which differentiates (and either abort or complete its growth). We rest whatever We want in the womb to the time We decide to bring you forth as Infants."** (Quran Sura 22/5)

These stages viz:

- 1) Nutfa: 'a drop of fluid'
- 2) Alaqa: 'something that clings or attaches itself'
- 3) Modgha: "a chewed lump"

will be discussed later.

The emphasis here is on the Quranic expression of the human embryo being formed in many successive stages expressed as Nutfa, Alaqa, Modgha, and each stage is further subdivided and explained in different verses of the Holy Quran, the Hadith of Prophet (peace be upon him) and the exegesis of the different commentators of the Holy Quran.

These astonishing revelations were not known until recently. The epigenesis doctrine i.e. creation of human embryo in successive stages were first put forward by Wolff (1759-69) and only became recognized and accepted late in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The accuracy of the descriptive terms used in the Holy Quran will be dealt with later. Here we emphasize that these details were never known until the 20th century.